

P.O. Box 42336
Pittsburgh, PA 15203
412.471.0999
www.bricolagePGH.org

November 2, 2017
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Emily Willson
emily@webbricolage.org
412.471.0999



Bricolage launches Immersive Companion Program designed to remove obstacles for patrons with accessibility needs

Known for risk-taking adventurous theater, Bricolage sets out to break accessibility barriers

PITTSBURGH, PA (November 2, 2017) — In conjunction with the world premiere of their immersive adventure *DODO*, Bricolage Production Company announces the official launch of their Immersive Companion Program (ICP). With the goal of making their immersive productions enjoyable to people of all abilities, the program provides trained one-on-one Companions that not only provide services such as ASL interpretation and audio description, but also tailored augmentations such as replacing visual or auditory elements with tactile experiences.

With organizations such as The Kennedy Center and the National Endowment for the Arts leading the charge, accessibility in the arts has seen an increase in focus across the country; yet, there are still many barriers to traditional theater that can hinder attendance for patrons with disabilities. Those barriers can be even harder to overcome with immersive theatrical productions, says Bricolage’s Managing Director Jackie Baker. “While traditional theater can rely on standardized services like audio description or ASL interpretation for performances, immersive theater requires solutions that are hand-tailored to each show and each individual. In order to preserve the heavily sensory-based and personalized nature of our work, accessibility has to be considered throughout the entire creative process. It requires buy-in from the creative team from the very start and a commitment to reasonable adjustments throughout the run.”

In 2015, Bricolage began testing Immersive Companions as a way to remove barriers for the blind and low vision community for their highly visual immersive experience, *SAINTS TOUR*. They invited Ann Lapidus, Bricolage board member and patron who is blind, to test the production with a companion and give candid feedback about her experience and suggested improvements. Two years later, the company is offering Immersive Companions during the world premiere of *DODO*, an immersive adventure at Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History. Companions can provide individual assistance with everything from anxiety to mobility issues and have already been deployed successfully in the first half of the run. Ms. Lapidus was one of the first to utilize the ICP for *DODO*. During her experience, her Companion used a variety of techniques to simulate the visual

elements of the piece, such as adding a tactile experience with an art sculpture while other patrons viewed 2D work, and essential oils to emulate the calming effect of a section of the piece that is rooted in light design. “The beauty of immersive theater is that the audience member can connect with a piece in a truly personal way,” says Ms. Lapidus. “Through the Immersive Companion Program, I was able to have a unique individualized experience all my own. My Immersive Companion stepped in when necessary to translate visual cues when needed, but also gave me the space to play and explore in an environment where I knew I was safe.”

Bricolage will continue to expand, develop, and test the ICP with each new immersive work and is already planning for a 2018 production. Bricolage’s Managing Director Jackie Baker explains, “We’re looking forward to continuing to expand the quality and capabilities of the ICP with feedback from each production and we hope to create tools and best practices that other theaters doing this work can utilize. We aren’t going to get it right the first time around, but we can’t cite a lack of tools or ideas as barriers while also not doing anything to help. We can’t claim to make adventurous theater while also hiding from the risk of failing. If this is anyone’s charge, it’s ours.”

ACCESSIBILITY FOR DODO

Bricolage is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and welcoming to all patrons and we endeavor to have transparency with all our programs that may present specific challenges. We want you to know that this production may be difficult for patrons with mobility issues, as it requires audiences to move up and down stairs, and through uneven terrain. For those patrons, we offer a wheelchair accessible path, as well as a wheelchair for those who do not have one but would prefer to utilize one. Bricolage also provides accommodations such as audio description through its Immersive Companion program. We encourage you to communicate any specific ways we might help you better enjoy your experience by giving us a call at 412.471.0999 or emailing Fred at fred@webbricolage.org two weeks in advance of your desired attendance date (if possible) so that we can design an accommodation unique to your needs.

TO BECOME AN IMMERSIVE COMPANION

Training and signups for companions are complete for *DODO*, but interested parties can be considered for future productions by emailing info@webbricolage.org or signing up to volunteer at Bricolage and denoting the immersive companion program their interest.

SUPPORT

Support for *DODO* has been provided by The National Endowment for the Arts, Clear Story, District 5 Sound, and The Opportunity Fund.

Bricolage Production Company is sponsored in part by Allegheny Regional Asset District, big Burrito Restaurant Group, Bistro to Go & Company, The Betsy McCormack Fund, Book Country, The Greater Pittsburgh Small Arts Organization Capitalization Program, The Gruber Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, Minuteman Press-Downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, The A. W. Mellon Education and Charitable Trust Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, Pittsburgh Port Authority, UBS Financial Services, 91.3 FM WYEP, 90.5 WESA

BRICOLAGE MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

Bricolage envisions theater not as a passive experience, but as a vehicle for heightened involvement for artist and audience alike. By combining different artistic mediums, nourishing local talent, producing provocative work, and facilitating audience engagement, Bricolage seeks to revitalize live performance for a new era.

The word Bricolage means “making artful use of what is at hand.” What excites this company is the connection and interaction between seemingly disparate elements, and the potential for these components to resonate as one cohesive event. "What's at hand" is Pittsburgh's changing landscape, its plentiful human and material resources, and the salient political, cultural, and ethical issues they encounter and react to each day.

Their approach encourages artists to take the creative risks necessary to create full-blooded, high-quality theatrical experiences that challenge audiences to engage in new ways, react, and express openly their opinions about our work – to have a stake in the creative discussion.

###